



Federal Trade Commission & Food and Drug Administration



Fact Sheet

FTC • 202-326-2180 • FDA • 301-827-6242

Mexico, United States, Canada Health Fraud Working Group (MUCH)

United States:

Over the past two years, since the MUCH weight loss initiative began, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has brought 40 law enforcement actions to stop the marketing and distribution of bogus weight-loss products and services. From these actions, U.S. courts have ordered more than \$188 million in consumer redress judgments against defendants. Many of these actions were a part of "Operation Big Fat Lie", a law enforcement sweep against companies making false weight loss claims. The FTC also has been active in educating consumers about diet rip-offs. One project is the FatFoe "teaser" Web site, now available in French and Spanish, as well as English. The FTC also has worked with legitimate businesses and the media. For example, the FTC's "Red Flag" media education campaign advises media outlets to stop circulating advertisements with false weight-loss claims.

During the same time period, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) prohibited the sale of dietary supplements containing ephedra (ephedrine alkaloids), which were popular for weight loss and energy, because they present an unreasonable risk of illness or injury. The FDA also sent warning letters to 25 firms for making false weight-loss claims and advisory letters to over 1000 retailers, manufacturers, and distributors of dietary supplements reminding them of their responsibility to ensure that claims accompanying sale of their products for weight loss are truthful, not misleading, and substantiated by sound science.

To help tackle the obesity epidemic, FDA's Obesity Working Group proposed long- and short-term measures focusing on "calories count," based on the scientific fact that weight control is mainly a function of caloric balance.

For additional information see:

Federal Trade Commission:
Red Flag Bogus Weight Loss Claims
<http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/online/edcams/redflag/index.html>

Food and Drug Administration:
HHS/FDA Strategy to Help Reduce Obesity
http://www.fda.gov/bbs/topics/news/2004/hhs_031204.html

(MUCH Fact Sheet)

How to lose and manage weight

<http://www.fda.gov/oc/opacom/hottopics/obesity.html>

Mexico:

The Government is revamping its legal framework to address this problem. In addition, the Federal Commission for the Protection from Sanitary Risks (COFEPRIS) and Office of the Federal Attorney for Consumer Protection (PROFECO) are working with the industry, distributors and mass media on self-regulation activities. Also, the Mexican government has introduced an education campaign for consumers to avoid being victims of weight-loss fraud.

For additional information see:

COFEPRIS:

Secretaría de Salud

<http://www.cofepris.gob.mx/bv/ceninf.htm>

<http://todoensobrepesoyobesidad.org>

PROFECO:

<http://www.profeco.gob.mx/html/revista/publicaciones/adelantos%5F05/prod%5Fmilagro%5Fene05.pdf>

Canada:

In Canada, Health Canada has refused entry into Canada of 24 fraudulent products making weight-loss claims. Through Project FairWeb, Canada's Competition Bureau targets internet-based weight-loss fraud. To-date, 458 sites have been reviewed and 73 percent of firms contacted have complied by removing misleading claims.

For additional information see:

Health Canada

<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/>

Competition Bureau

<http://www.competitionbureau.gc.ca/>

Or visit the new Trilateral Cooperation Web site at:

http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/intactivit/trilateral-coop/index_e.html